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AUTHOR Swartz, Stanley L.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Results of a national survey of state certification standards for cross-training of regular and special education teachers (n=51, including the District of Columbia) are analyzed relative to implementation of the Regular Education Initiative, a proposal that stresses increased responsibility by regular teachers in the education of handicapped children and more cooperation between regular and special education generally. Training requirements including both separate courses and content embedded in existing coursework were reported. Specific findings included: 24 states required that special education content be included in the regular education training program but only 15 required a specific course; of these less than half required training in instructional methods for special needs learners and only a few states required teaching experience with handicapped children. An additional survey of 13 California State University System teacher training programs is reported, as California requires special education teachers to hold regular teaching credentials. Recommendations include: all teachers should have training in identifying and developing appropriate educational programs for special needs learners; all teachers should have preservice teaching experience with both handicapped and nonhandicapped learners; and special education teachers should be trained and experienced regular classroom teachers. Includes 12 references. (DB)

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Training Teachers to Participate in the Regular Education Initiative

Stanley L. Swartz, J. Francisco Hidalgo, and Patricia A. Hays

California State University
San Bernardino

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Abstract

Results of a national survey of state certification standards for crosstraining of regular and special education teachers are reported (N=51, including the District of Columbia). These data are analyzed relative to implementation of the Regular Education Initiative (REI), a proposal that includes an increased responsibility for regular teachers in the education of handicapped children and more cooperation between regular and special education generally. It was a basic assumption that the success of the REI would, in part, depend on adequate training of regular teachers with the necessary skills to work with handicapped children and providing special teachers with a knowledge of regular education practices and how special needs can be accommodated in the regular classroom. Training requirements including both separate courses and content embedded in existing coursework were reported. In addition, teacher training programs in the California State University System (N=20) were surveyed. Because California requires special education teachers to hold regular teaching credentials, these programs represent a potential model for other states.

The considerable diversity of the requirements reported and their likely impact are discussed. Recommendations for teacher training programs and the implications for the Regular Education Initiataive are reviewed.

Providing special education services within the regular education classroom has been proposed as an alternative to the current practice of providing services for special needs learners in pull-out categorical programs and separate classrooms (Will, 1986). This so-called regular education initiative (REI), has as basic premises: that 1) many children with learning problems are not eligible for special education, 2) students who are diagnosed as handicapped are stigmatized by their placement in segregated programs, and 3) special education does not include prevention as a major emphasis. Suggested remedies included a delivery model based in the regular classroom, early identification and intervention, curriculum-based assessment, and the inclusion of all students with learning problems regardless of their eligibility for special education. The REI returns to classroom teachers responsibility for educating students with learning problems.

"Unless major structural changes are made, the field of special education is destined to become more of a problem, and less of a solution for children with special needs" (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987). In discussing the necessary restructuring of special and regular education they summarized research that pointed to the inefficiency of special education programs. They also suggested that the overlapping of programs and services for special needs students (i.e., handicapped, low income, bilingual, etc.) justified combined programming (Wang,

Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986) and that all students can be taught effectively in regular classrooms using broad instructional systems, such as curriculum-based assessment (Reynolds, et al.).

There is a substantial body of literature that speaks to the inadequacy of special education programs (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Lily, 1988; Reynolds, et al.; Stainback & Stainback, 1987). Gartner & Lipsky (1987) indicated that the system is inadequate because it is not integrated and that the referral, assessment and placement procedures used in special education are barely more effective than chance. Lily (1988) concluded that the REI is a natural progression of the special education movement and is neccessary for special education to finally participate in the general education community.

California has begun a similar initiative with its Every Student Succeeds. Only with a program that speaks to the special needs of all learners does California believe it can effectively educate children in a state as complex and diverse as California. Every Students Succeeds aims to remove the artificial walls between categorial and regular education program. Students will receive necessary educational and support services in the regular classroom. This will combine the most effective elements of both the regular and special classroom.

Some concern regarding the impact of the REI on special education continues to be expressed (Braaten, Kauffman, Braaten,

Polsgrove, and Nelson, 1988; Hallahan, Keller, McKinney, Lloyd, and Bryan, 1988). The first group expressed concern that the REI supporters suggested an overidentification of behavioral disordered students and that these children would continue to have needs that could not be accommodated in the regular classroom. The second group reviewed much of the literature that has been cited as support for the REI. They concluded that the support for REI found in special education efficacy research and in studies examining the Adaptive Learning Environments Model was minimal.

Accomplishing the conversion of programs and the change of responsibility necessitated by the REI assumes adequate training of regular education teachers to work with handicapped children and providing special teachers with the knowledge of regular education practices and how special needs can be accommodated in the regular classroom. Concerns regarding the role of regular teachers in the mainstreaming process and their training for involvement with handicapped children were expressed when P.L. 94-142 first became law (Swartz, 1978) and continue in current research (Stone & Brown, 1986-87).

Teaching skills inherent in the concept of quality education are ones which are required by both general and special education teachers (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987). A dual system of educators to teach handicapped or nonhandicapped children is not necessary (Stainback & Stainback, 1984) and only contributes to the

separation and fragmentation that serves no useful purpose (Stainback & Stainback, 1987).

Two studies a decade apart (Patton & Braithwaite, 1980, 1990) examined certification patterns for special education teachers and recertification requirements for regular classroom teachers. Changes noted included: 1) a majority of states now require special education courses for regular certification (21% to 71%), 2) only nine states require special education coursework for recertification, and 3) there is flexibility allowed by the states on how this special education content is delivered.

This study was designed to collect data regarding crosstraining of regular and special education teachers. In addition to a review of special education training requirements for regular teachers similar to one completed by Patton & Braithwaite (1990), a review of regular education training requirements for special education teachers was completed. Both training efforts were considered of equal importance to the effective implementation of the REI.

Method

State departments of education in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia were asked to provide copies of teacher certification requirements for both regular and special education teachers. Data collected for regular education teacher training included: 1) required special education content, 2) content format (separate coursework or embedded content), and 3) required practical experience with handicapped children. Data collected for special education teacher training included: 1) required content in the foundations of education, 2) required content in regular education curriculum and/or methods, 3) content format (separate or embedded), 4) specific training in consultation skills, and 5) required practical experience with nonhandicapped children.

Analysis of elements of state regulatory language was made and consensus was reached using an independent review by two authors and three research assistants. Information received from state departments, for the most part, was clear and unambiguous. In those cases where agreement was not reached, follow-up phone calls asking for clarification were made.

Because California is among the states providing REI leadership, teacher training programs in the California State University System (N=20) were surveyed regarding their implementation of the state credentialing requirement for special

education training of regular education teachers. All special education teachers are already required to hold a basic teaching credential before they begin their special education training. Implementation models, both separate coursework and the infusion approach, were analyzed to evaluate the extent to which required training objectives were being met.

Data collected included: 1) special education content delivery format (separate courses or embedded), 3) rating of importance of specific special education competencies, 4) required types of experiences with handicapped children, and 5) special education expertise of teacher training faculty.

Results

National Study

All states and the District of Columbia (N=51) responded to the request for certification requirements for regular and special education teachers. Responses varied from states with extensive crosstraining requirements to states whose regulations were silent on the need for special education training of regular teachers and regular education training of special education teachers.

Required special education training of regular teachers is reported in Tables 1 (elementary) and 2 (secondary). By far the most common method of delivering this training is by including instruction on special education topics in existing regular

SPECIAL EDUCATION TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR REGULAR EDUCATION TEACHERS
ELEMENTARY LEVEL (N=51)

TABLE 1

REGULAR EDUCATION: REQUIREMENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION	A L	A E	A Z	A R	C A	C O	C T	D E	F L	G A	H I	I D	I L	I N	I A	K S	K Y	L A	M E	M D	M A	M I	M N	M S	M O	M T	N E	N V	N H	N J	N M	N Y	N C	N D	N H	O E	O K	O R	O A	P I	R C	S D	S N	S X	T T	U A	V A	V I	W Y	W C	W D	%	N
one course	X				X				X				X	X				X	X	X					X	X				X											X		X				X		X	29%	15
embedded		X		X	X			X			X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X	X	X			X			X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		47%	24
unspecified																											X			X		X																				8%	4
general survey	X	X		X	X	X			X		X		X	X		X					X		X								X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X			41%	21
instructional methods		X			X	X			X						X				X		X		X	X				X			X			X	X	X	X											37%	19
student teaching-special education					X									X																	X																				10%	5

SPECIAL EDUCATION TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR REGULAR TEACHERS
SECONDARY LEVEL (N=51)
TABLE 2

REGULAR EDUCATION: REQUIREMENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION	A L	A E	A Z	A R	C A	C O	C T	D E	F L	G A	H I	I D	I L	I N	I A	K S	K Y	L A	M E	M D	M A	M I	M N	M S	M O	M T	N E	N V	N H	N J	N M	N Y	N C	N D	N H	O E	O K	O R	O A	P I	R C	S D	S N	S X	T T	U A	V A	V I	W Y	W C	W D	%	N
one course	X				X				X				X	X				X	X						X	X							X								X		X				X		X	27%	14
embedded		X		X	X			X			X	X				X	X	X			X	X	X	X			X			X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		45%	23
unspecified																											X			X		X																				6%	3
general survey	X	X		X	X	X			X		X		X	X		X					X		X								X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X			41%	21
instructional methods	X	X			X	X			X						X				X		X		X	X				X			X			X	X	X	X											33%	17
student teaching-special education					X									X																	X																				10%	5

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education coursework (embedded). Twenty-four states reported this requirement for both elementary and secondary levels.

Fifteen states required a specific course in special education for regular teachers. Less than half of the states required topics that included diagnosis and characteristics of the handicapped and a similar number required methods of instruction for handicapped learners. Few states (six for elementary and seven for secondary) required any teaching experience with handicapped learners.

The majority of states reported a different training pattern for preschool age children. Table 3 summarizes crosstraining requirements for early childhood education and early childhood handicapped. Twenty-five states reported requiring coursework in special education and eight reported experience with handicapped children for early childhood education credentials. Requirements for early childhood handicapped teaching credentials included coursework in regular education (22 states) and experience with nonhandicapped children (10 states).

Regular education training requirements for special education teachers are reported in Table 4. Twenty-four states required special education teachers to hold a regular teaching credential. Thirty-eight states required a general foundations course and 44 required an instructional methods course. Thirty-one states specifically required a course on consultation

CROSSTRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
TABLE 3

	A L	A E	A Z	B A	C A	C O	C T	D E	F L	G A	H I	I D	I L	I N	I A	K S	K Y	L A	M E	M D	M A	M I	M N	M S	M O	M T	N E	N V	N H	N J	N M	N Y	N C	N D	N B	O K	O R	O A	P I	R C	S D	S N	T X	T T	U A	V T	V A	W A	W V	W I	W Y	W C	D C	%	N
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION																			1							1					1		1								1										3				
(REGULAR EDUCATION, N=50)																																																							
experience with special education					X	X															X								X			X						X			X							X				16%	8
coursework in special education	X		X		X	X				X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X				X				X			X			X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X			X			50%	23
EARLY CHILDHOOD HANDICAPPED																																																							
(SPECIAL EDUCATION, N=43)			2		2				2										2		2				2			2	2		4								2	2	2														
experience with regular education								X					X			X				X	X		X															X				X	X										23%	10
coursework in regular education		X		X		X		X	X	X				X	X					X	X		X								X		X				X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X					51%	22

1 = No Early Childhood Experience
2 = No Early Childhood
3 = 0-3 only
4 = Pre K-12 authorization

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REGULAR EDUCATION TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

TABLE 4

N = 51

SPECIAL EDUCATION: REQUIREMENTS IN REGULAR EDUCATION	A L	A K	A 2	A R	C A	C O	C T	D E	F L	G A	H I	I D	I L	I N	I A	K S	K Y	L A	M E	M D	M A	M I	M N	M S	M O	M T	N E	N V	N H	N J	N M	N Y	N C	N D	N H	O K	O R	O A	P I	R C	S D	S N	T X	T T	U T	V A	V A	W V	W I	W Y	W C	D	%	N
general foundations	X		X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X		X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	75%	38
instructional methods	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	86%	44
regular education cert./eligibility	X				X	X										X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X		X					X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			47%	24
consultation	X	X	X	X	X	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		2	X	X		X	X		X	X	3	X	X	X		X	X	X	5		X	X		6	61%	31
experience with regular education	X				X	X							X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X			X	X				X		X	X	X	X	4	X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	57%	29

1 = severe/profound
2 = learning disabled, behavior disordered only
3 = hearing impaired only
4 = learning disabled, orthopedically handicapped only
5 = emotionally disturbed only
6 = mentally retarded only

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for special education teachers. Twenty-nine states required special education teachers to have experience with nonhandicapped children.

California Study

Thirteen teacher training programs in the California State University System (12 elementary and 13 secondary) responded to the survey of special education training required of regular education teachers. All but one program indicated support for the requirement that special education teachers hold a regular teaching credential.

Programs used both separate coursework (12 elementary and 11 secondary) and content embedded into existing courses (8 elementary and 8 secondary) to deliver special education content. The separate course title most frequently chosen used the word mainstreaming in the title and the course used most frequently for embedded courses was an educational psychology course.

The Commission on Teacher Credentialing prescribes the standards for teacher training in the State of California. Standards directly related to special education required by the Commission for regular teachers received major emphasis by reporting training programs. These standards included the following:

1. Major educational theorists, research on effective teaching practices, and the use of those practices among students with handicapping conditions.

2. Theories of human learning and cognition, and ways to identify students' preferred learning modes or styles.

3. Classroom practices and instructional materials that promote educational equity, and ones that undermine equity among students with handicapping conditions.

4. Teacher candidates encourage all students to excel and promote involvement of students with handicapping conditions, in all classroom activities.

Only two programs (both secondary) reported an early experience with handicapped children requirement. Six elementary and seven secondary programs reported that student teaching should include experience in a special class and all reported that student teaching should include experience with handicapped children in the regular classroom. Both elementary and secondary programs rated their faculty only average for training and experience in special education.

Discussion

The extent to which regular education teachers have been trained and feel competent to work with special needs learners will directly affect the ultimate success of the Regular Education Initiative. The successful integration of special needs learners assumes an environment managed by a teacher who understands special needs and is able to individualize instruction to meet these needs. Though twenty-four states required that special education content be included in the regular education training program, only fifteen required a specific course. Of these, less than half required training in instructional methods for special needs learners and only a few states required teaching experience with handicapped children. This level of training is unlikely to ensure a high comfort level for regular education teachers faced with the prospect of having increased responsibility for special needs learners.

The REI can only be judged responsible to the extent that appropriate preparation precedes its implementation. It is clear that training regular teachers to teach special needs learners is not yet a priority. The requirements mandated by the states represent a dual system of training that obviously assumes a dual education system for children. Such a system not only segregates children in the public schools, it also segregates teachers throughout their training programs.

Almost half of the states require special education teachers to first be trained as regular education teachers. The remaining states require various levels of regular education training but allow a teacher to be trained for special education only. If we assume that special education teachers will have an important consultative role in the REI, the ability to articulate the needs of special learners in regular classrooms will be important. Teachers who have experience with both nonhandicapped and handicapped children might be expected to have more of the skills necessary to be effective participants in the REI.

California teacher training programs continue to strongly support the regular education credential requirement for special education teachers. A similar commitment to train regular teachers to work with special needs learners was unclear. California has more students placed in categorical programs than any other state. The California Every Student Succeeds initiative suggests that more special needs students will become the responsibility of regular education. Some re-examination of the importance of special needs in the regular education training program is warranted.

The data suggest a number of recommendations for teacher training that would contribute to the success of the Regular Education Initiative:

1. All teachers should have specific training in identifying and developing appropriate educational programs for a wide range

of special needs learners. This training should include the effective management of special needs learners in the regular classroom.

2. All teachers should have preservice teaching experience with both handicapped and nonhandicapped learners. These nonhandicapped learners should include the wide range of children served by categorical programs.

3. Special education teachers should be trained and experienced regular classroom teachers. This background will help ensure the collaboration between regular and special education teachers necessary for implementing the REI.

Only teachers broadly prepared to work with the full range of student abilities can be effective in programs designed to serve all learners. A program model that includes all children in the mainstream of public education is the model most likely to ensure equal access to programs and maximum benefit from those programs. To be successful the Regular Education Initiative will need this kind of fully trained teacher and a commitment from regular and special education alike that diverse groups of students can be effectively served in the regular classroom.

Authors: Stanley L. Swartz, Ph.D., Professor of Education and Chair, Department of Advanced Studies in Education, J. Francisco Hidalgo, Ph.D., Professor of Education and Chair, Department of Secondary and Vocational Education, and Patricia A. Hays, Research Assistant, California State University, San Bernardino.

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